

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



299

PARASHAS VAYEILECH

תש"פ

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

The Tefillah of the Later Generations Is Better than the Earlier Ones

"ויקרא משה ליהושע ואמר אליו לעיני כל ישראל חזק ואמץ כי אתה תבוא את העם הזה אל הארץ... ואתה תנחילנה אותם" (ז ת)

Harav Elimelech of Dinov explained:

When asking about the *Geulah*, we might have thoughts in our hearts: Earlier generations of *tzaddikim* and *chassidim* who were ten times more deserving than us asked and did not merit; how will we merit to be redeemed? Therefore, Moshe called to Yehoshua "in front of the eyes of all Yisrael" and said to him: Even though my *tefillas* to enter Eretz Yisrael were not accepted, "*chazak v'ematz, strengthen yourself*" because you will merit "to bring them into the land." And thus, Moshe taught the following generations not to give up pleading for things that previous generations did not merit, because it is possible that now is the "*eis lechennenenah ki va moed*, for there is a time to favor it, for the appointed season has arrived." (*Tehillim* 102:14)

Likutei Mahart"za

Hešter Panim After the Regret

"ומצאנו רעות רבות וצרות ואמר ביום ההוא הלא על כל אין אלקי בקרבי מצאוני הרעות האלה; ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני ביום ההוא על כל הרעה אשר עשה כי פנה אל אלהים אחרים" (לא יז-יח)

Many have asked: After Am Yisrael recognized their sin and regretted it, why should Hashem punish them with "*V'Anochi hašter aštir* ...And I will hide and conceal"

There are several answers to this:

1. The *Chasam Sofer* explains that Bnei Yisrael might erroneously think that the main thing is that their intentions in their heart should be sincere and correct, but that the actions of the *mitzvos* are not important, and they are not punished for not doing them. Thus, they will only admit to "*al ki ein Elokai bekirbi*" – because there is no G-d inside of me, meaning the thoughts of the heart, but they will not regret their lax attitude towards practical *mitzvos*. Therefore, the Torah warns that the *hešter panim* will be a punishment "*al kol hara'ah asher asah*, for all the bad that he has done."

2. The *Avnei Nezer* explained: Am Yisrael's regret will be only "*al ki ein Elokai bekirbi*" – for the serious sins that caused the Shechinah to leave

Mibe'er Emunim

Sources for the Virtue of Answering Amen

Answering Amen with Emunah

"ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני ביום ההוא על כל הרעה אשר עשה כי פנה אל אלהים אחרים" (לא יח)

"Come and see what Chazal said (*Midrash Tehillim* 31) on the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 31:24): '*Ehevu es Hashem kol chassidav emunim notzer Hashem*': Who are they? Those who answer amen with *emunah*. One says '*Baruch Mechayah meisim*' yet Mashiach did not yet arrive, and they still believe in Me that I revive the dead; one says '*Baruch Goel Yisrael*' and still they were not yet redeemed for now, and they were returned to bondage, and yet they believe that I am destined to redeem them. That is "*emunim notzer Hashem*." In other words, this is the virtue of Yisrael, that they believe all the time, and even in a time of *hešter panim*, they do not sway from their faith that Hashem will redeem them from the exile. And their faith is expressed in their answering amen, even for what they have not yet seen with their eyes...

Furthermore, the reward of someone who answers amen is so great: Chazal said (*Tanchuma* 96 7) "Anyone who answers amen in this world merits to answer amen in the next world." In other words, while amen that is answered in this world indicates *emunah*, [believing in something one did not yet witness] amen answered in the Next World refers to what the person will see at that time, when it will be revealed to him that everything he believed in this world came true. Then he will praise and thank Hashem for the *emunah* that he was able to believe in this world even though it had not yet happened at the time.

Be'er Moshe

them. But they will not express regret for the minor sins that led to the serious ones, and thus their *teshuvah* will not be accepted. This fact is also alluded to in the *passuk*: "*V'Anoch hašter aštir panai... ki panah el Elohim acheirim*" – the punishment of

concealment will be for the fact that they did not regret their transgression of the commandment "*Al tiftu el ha'elilim*" (*Vayikra* 19:4), which forbids a person from expressing any interest in *avodah zarah*, lest he be drawn to it. (*Ramban*, *ibid*)

3. Harav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin offers a different explanation: The *teshuvah* of Yisrael will be accepted, and that is what it says "*V'Anochi hašter aštir Panai bayom hahu*"—and it does not say "*meihem*, from them," but "*al kol hara'ah asher asah*", for all the bad that they did. Because they will have regret for the bad things that they did, Hashem will *kavyochol* turn His Eyes away from their sins.

4. The Maharasham of Berzhan explained: The Torah first says "*V'amar bayom hahu*" and he will say on that day, to teach that Bnei Yisrael will only regret their sins for fear of troubles befalling them. But when the trouble will pass, they will return to their ways. Therefore, Hashem will conceal His Face from them, because such *teshuvah* is not accepted. As the Rambam ruled (*Teshuvah* 2:2): "What is *teshuvah*? That the sinner should abandon the sin and remove it from his thoughts and resolve in his heart not to do it again... and the Knower of all secrets will testify that he will not return to this sin ever."

5. Additionally, Harav Moshe Pollak, the Rav of Bonihad, explained: When a person in trouble puts his faith in others, and only turns to Hashem when he is disappointed by them, then Hashem doesn't hear his *tefillah*, as it says (*Tehillim* 18:42): "*Yeshaveh v'ein moshia*, they pray but no one saves them," meaning, he pleads first to others, and only when he sees that there is no savior then he turns "*al Hashem*." Hence, "He does not answer them." As for the relevance here, the Torah explains: "Why '*v'Anochi hašter aštir*'? Because at first "he turned to other gods."

6. The Rebbe Harav Mordechai Chaim of Slonim extracted from the words of the *passuk*: "*V'amar... al ki ein Elokai bekirbi metzauni hara'os ha'eleh*" that the main pain of those repenting will be only about the bad that struck them and not about the fact that they deviated from the path of Hashem. Because such a *viduy* does not come from the depths of the heart, they will be punished by *hešter panim*.

Drashos Chasam Sofer, Vol. I p. 144 2; Shem MiShmuel 5672; Pri Tzaddik; Techeiles Mordechai; Vayedaber Moshe; Nesivei Yeshurun Moadim p. 179

The Zohar says in this *parashah* (285 2):

"When Yisrael answer amen, the gateways of blessing open before them, and when they cry in *tefillah*, a Bas Kol declares: '*Pischu she'arim lekabel tefillasam*, open the gates to accept their prayers."

Let us all take upon ourselves a tried and true *segulah* for the Yom Hadin, to begin our day with answering amen after *Birchos Hashachar*, and we will merit to have our *tefillas* answered willingly and with compassion, amen.

Birchos Hashachar



Aloud



With kavanah



Bechavrusa



Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa (2)

How is a Person Called a Tzaddik?

Pursuant to the previous segment, where we discussed the virtues of the custom of reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, this segment will address the *halachah* that is the source of this practice. As cited in the *Poskim*, the custom of reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* was intended to make it possible to fulfill the *takanah* of answering 90 amens in a day.

The *takanah* of answering 90 amens each day, as brought by the holy Zohar (*Tikkunei Zohar* 18 p. 33 1), is that each person needs to make sure to fulfill each day the four *takanos* alluded to in the world “צדיק” – which are 90 amens, 4 *Kedushos*, 10 *Kaddish* and reciting 100 *brachos*.

Rabbeinu Bechaye wrote in his *sefer*, *Kad Hakemach* (entry *Brachah*):

“Someone who is careful about the 90 amens, is called a *tzaddik* and of him the Navi (Yeshayahu 26:2) says: “*Pischu she’arim vayvo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*.” Don’t read it “*emunim*” but rather “*amenim*” – those who answer amen.” Similarly, the *sefer Ohr Hayashar* (by the Maharam Papirash, a disciple of the Ari, *Amud Ha’avodah*, 6:22) says: “A person is not called a *tzaddik* until he completes 90 amens and 4 *Kedushos*, 10 *Kaddish* and 100 *brachos* – an acronym for ‘*tzaddik*.’”

90 Amens – Only on Brachos

The *Rema MiPano* (*Shu”t* 109) wrote that the 90 amens can only be counted if they are in response to *brachos*, because amen answered for *Kaddish* is included in the *takanah* of hearing *Kaddish* 10 times. As such it is very hard to fulfill this *takanah* unless a person listens to *Birchos Hashachar* from a friend and answers amen. As the *Rema MiPano* writes:

“And it is very good to implement a practice that the *shaliach tzibbur* should make the *Birchos Hashachar* out loud and the ones answering should have in mind not to be *yotzei* the *brachah*. Not only that but friends who sleep in one room...should rise early and each one should make the *brachos* himself and his friends will answer amen, and then they will go with emotion to the House of Hashem. And when someone makes the *brachos* himself and then his wife and children big and small make the *brachos* for him--then there are no better beloved friends than these. That is the *din* for those who make the *brachos* in shul one after another, to be *mezakeh* others to answer amen

in a group.”

This *takanah* is the fundamental upon which this custom is based. The *Mishnah Berurah* writes on the words of the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 6 4): “There are those who practice that after one makes *Birchos Hashachar* and they answer amen after him, one of the ones who answered then makes the *brachos* and others answer to amen. In this order all those who answered amen first, follow.” The *Mishnah Berurah* writes (13): “And their intention is that each one should complete 90 amens for the day...”

90 Amens – Before Davening

Moreover, the *sefer Toldos Aharon* (by Harav Aharon of Zhitomir, one of the giants of *chassidus*, *Parashas Shoftim*) explained by way of *Sod* the *takanah* of ninety amens. The purpose is to open the three gateways that *tefillah* needs to pass through on its way to being accepted before the King of Kings. From his words it is apparent that one has to answer 90 amens before *davening*, which is certainly not possible without hearing *Birchos Hashachar* from several people and answering after them.

The Ateres Tzvi of Zidichov brought proof of this from the Zohar (*Tikkunei Zohar Chadash* Vol. II, p. 84 1). It says that someone who did not manage to answer 90 amens should have in mind with the 15 “*vavs*”, the first letters of the *tefillah* of *Emes Veyatziv* after *Kriyas Shema*, to combine together to be numerically equal to 90. Together with the letter aleph of *Emes*, they join to become numerically equivalent to 91, which is the same value as “amen.”

From the fact that the Zohar does not say to wait until *Chazaras Hashatz* and the other *brachos* of the day to answer amen after them to complete the 90 amens, it appears that the principle of answering amen is to reach 90 amens before *davening*. This can only be done through reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*. (*Hagahos Bnei Abba* on *Sefer Pesora D’Abba*, *Birchos Hashachar* 6)

Which one of us does not want to be called a *tzaddik*, especially during these days of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, when we yearn to merit to be sealed in the *sefer* of *tzaddikim gemurim*? Here is a way that *Chazal* established for us through which we can earn this coveted title. Let us take upon ourselves from today on to be careful to listen and recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, and through that we will merit to be inscribed in the *sefer* of *tzaddikim*. Amen.

Coming Full Circle on Kol Nidrei After Seventy Years

Already at the entrance gate of the Kaufering labor camp, near Landsberg, Germany, whose remnants exist to this day, the horrors became clear. In this camp, built towards the end of the Holocaust, the Nazis ym”s, would make their victims sleep in pits that were dug into the earth and covered with improvised roofs made of a mix of straw and mud.

Each night, thousands of Jews interned in the camp were packed into these improvised trenches, after toiling all day to build massive bunkers for the collapsing German air force. In the morning, at first light, they were awoken to continue laboring until evening, without letup. Their work involved dragging loads building materials that were nearly equal to their body weight.

Words cannot possibly describe the horror that the Kaufering inmates endured. Each day, some eighty people died of hunger and disease. There is no explanation for the fact that a significant number of the inmates survived – besides for the Jewish spirit that continued to throb inside them, even in this valley of death. One of the survivors of Kaufering was Reb Shimon Benish, zt”l. Reb Shimon lost his wife and children during the Holocaust, yet he refused to lose his Jewish spirit despite the horrors he went through. He did everything in his power to sweep people up with his fervor.

His son, Reb Chaim Bneish, related a story that a Jew named Aryeh, a survivor of the same camp, witnessed and related about his father.

Aryeh related:

One of the hardest days we endured was at the beginning of 5705. One morning, an announcement was made that a large shipment of coal dust had arrived in the nearby airport and that it was our job to move it to the storage area.

We were rushed to the airport, worked from morning till night, under heavy rain, carrying the sacks of coal to the storehouses. Many people could not stand the load and literally collapsed to their deaths.

At the end of the days’ work, we all liked like sticky black messes from the mixture of rain, dust and wet clothes. We were then marched to the cargo train that would take us to the camp where we lived.

These were open rail cars, without a roof, and were originally designed to transport cattle. Eighty people were packed into each one, in sad, apathetic silent. Our stomachs growled with hunger, our worn bodies yearned for some rest, and no one had the strength to even move their lips.

Suddenly, from deep inside the car we heard a cry: “*Oy, Yiden! S’iz heint Kol Nidrei nacht*” – It’s the night of *Kol Nidrei*! It was the voice of your father, Reb Shimon, and it rippled like an electric current through the weary prisoners.

It’s hard to describe what happened from that moment on. I have never heard such a *tefillah*. Everyone came to life, all at once. Your father began to weep: “*Shir Hamaalos Mima’amakim*” and everyone repeated after him in a thunderous cry that could be heard even by those in the other cars.

The cry was even louder than the rain, and the Nazis who were in a protected car heard it as well. They began to run with their guns drawn in an effort to restore order, but that did not faze us. We continued to shout with all our might: “*Hashem, shimah bekol*”, and when the soldiers realized it was not an uprising, they left us alone and went back to their positions.

When we returned to the camp, many of us, still under the impression of the *tefillah*, did not go to the kitchen to get our daily ration of gruel that kept us alive. We went to bed immediately, as we were, soaked and filthy from mud and water.

That was our *tefillah* *Kol Nidrei* that bitter night.

Aryeh then continued:

A year later, on Erev Yom Kippur of 5706, I was already liberated. I was alone in the world, and as such, I abandoned my heritage. I found myself sitting in a village near Landsberg, milking the cows of the farmer who I worked for.

When the day began to wane, I remembered the same day and time six years earlier. I remembered the delicacies my mother served at the *seudas hamfsekas*, my father resting his hands on my head and blessing me, and walking together with my father and brothers to *Kol Nidrei* in shul.

Suddenly, a black, thick screen blocked the pleasant memories and they were replaced by the horrific images of the slave labor, the hunger, the murder, the suffering and the loss of my beloved family who went up in ashes and left me alone in the world.

Those were the memories that always made me want to forget everything, to shuck off any burden and to begin a new life that perhaps would bring some illusion of happiness...But this time, it was different. This time, from within the black cloud of misery, your father’s voice thundered:

“*Oy, Yidden! S’iz heint Kol Nidrei nacht!*”

This cry penetrated like an arrow into the depths of my heart. In a flash, I abandoned the cows and began to run towards Landsberg, the nearby city. I had heard that several *minyanim* of Torah observant Jews had gathered there, and I hoped to be able to join them for the *tefillah* of Yom Kippur.

“I’ll at least say *Yizkor* for Reb Shimon’s soul and then I’ll go back to work,” I thought to myself. But a surprise awaited me right at the entrance to the improvised shul. There was Reb Shimon himself, dressed in white, as though he had returned from the dead. He was holding *talleisim* and *machzorim* and giving them to anyone who arrived.

It was the second *tefillah* that Aryeh davened on Yom Kippur together with Reb Shimon. Since then, decades passed, during which time he came to Eretz Yisrael, but tragically, cut off all ties with *Yiddishkeit*.

He continued to maintain ties with Reb Shimon. Years later, Reb Shimon built a shul in Aryeh’s city in memory of one of their friends from Kaufering, a Yid who had passed away childless and left the money to Reb Shimon. He chose to build a shul in the man’s memory and named it Heichal Shlomo. Reb Shimon invited Aryeh to the *chanukas habayis*.

Relates Reb Chaim Benish:

The conversation with Aryeh took place in 5771, and afterwards, my father continued to keep up with him. From time to time I called to see how he was doing, and on the Erev Rosh Hashanah afterwards, I called him to wish him a good year. During that conversation, Aryeh asked me if the shul that my father had built was still active. I replied that it was.

On Motzaei Yom Kippur I called the Rav of the shul and asked if an elderly Jew who he did not know had joined the *davening* this year. He replied that someone had – and that person met Aryeh’s description. He had entered the shul with a new *machzor* in hand and davened with great emotion. When the Rav tried to help him with *davening*, he rejected the assistance, saying he was familiar with the *davening* from his father’s home.

So, seventy years later, Reb Shimon could rejoice On High. His *Kol Nidrei* had prevailed and returned an errant soul to its source.

Ish Lehavah p. 195